

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 19 June 2024

1. Research Strategy Away Day and Committee Priorities for 2024/25

The Committee discussed a paper outlining the recent Research Strategy Away Day and suggested priorities for 2024/25, and endorsed the suggested priorities.

The Head of PIP noted the following:

- (a) Although financial concerns were a prominent theme on the Away Day, this was not included as a priority as it cut across all areas of work.
- (b) The priorities listed were not intended to supersede or replace the Research Strategy Implementation Plan; rather, the paper aimed to summarise discussions which had taken place at the May meeting of the Committee (M.23-24/156-158) and the Away Day, and further comment as to how such priorities might be converted into actions was welcomed.

The Committee **observed** the following:

- (a) A number of suggestions were made to further refine the priorities, which would be taken forwards when planning business for 2024/2025. This included accounting for the degree of change ongoing at the University when embedding the new model for research support and Professional Services.
- (c) Several of the suggested priorities would be best considered as 'business as usual', not to be ranked in order of importance. The priorities could be further grouped, for example as 'oversight and monitoring', to aid in determining next steps.

2. Report on the ARR Process

The Committee received an oral report on the ARR process.

The Head of PIP reported that academic time and workload remained a consideration when planning for the 2024/2025 exercise. It was clarified that the intent remained for the ARR to be part of the Five-Year Forecast exercise coordinated by the Planning Office.

The Committee noted the value of the ARR in providing an overview of activity in departments, as well as fulfilling the oversight role of the Committee outlined in the Terms of Reference (both in terms of providing direct communication and in understanding the baseline within departments prior to implementing changes). It was also helpful in prompting reflection ahead of REF, and provided a channel for departments to feel listened to at the institutional level. Further specific reflection on the institutional KPIs relevant to research would be incorporated into future iterations of the ARR.

The form that feedback to departments would take as part of the 2023/2024 ARR was yet to be finalised, however the Committee suggested that the priorities arising from the URC Away Day, which largely reflected those raised in the ARR returns, could be used to demonstrate how the concerns of departments would be incorporated into the business of URC.

3. Consultation on Draft Guidance for Generative AI in PGR Programmes

The Committee considered the consultation on draft Guidance for Generative AI in PGR Programmes. It was noted that the draft Guidance was in alignment with other policies across the institution, including those covering undergraduate students, and had been produced in collaboration with colleagues both internal and external to the University. The Guidance would be iterative and would be updated as technology continued to evolve. The length of the document was due to requests for case studies exploring the issues involved.

The Committee noted that the document was clear and principled, and recognised the need for flexible guidance which allowed for an effective response to the nature of generative AI. The contents of the Guidance would be

integrated into training for PGRs and for supervisors. Spotting the use of generative AI remained a challenge - although providers such as TurnItIn had tools to identify the use of generative AI, the effectiveness of these was not clear.

It was further emphasised that the Guidance ought to be user-friendly and easily located on the University website.

4. Other Business

- a. The Committee approved amendments to the Terms of Reference (Appendix One), which had been made to reflect decisions around the inclusion of Nominated Alternates and a representative of the PGR community on the Committee membership.
- b. The Committee approved a draft minute summarising the written resolution process of the draft Research Reputation and Social Responsibility Framework, and endorsed further work in the area. The Framework had been approved by UEB and would be taken forward as planned.
- c. Departments remained concerned about the financial situation and the resultant strains on research support.
- d. Work continued in support of the Changing the Work framework, including changes to the structures concerning ethical approval; this would require the involvement of a large number of individuals across the institution, and was expected to pick up speed in the autumn. The York Graduate Research School was working to streamline the TAP and progression processes.
- e. The RIKE Directorate was working to ensure support was in place for research operations.
- f. The Committee approved an amendment to the Open Access Publications Policy to include a Fair Attribution statement, and endorsed further work by the Open Research Strategy Group. The Policy currently states in paragraph 7:

Research publications should acknowledge all authors, funding, and the University of York, following best practice and using standard persistent identifiers wherever possible.

It is proposed that this paragraph be amended to specifically reference Fair Attribution and read:

Research publications should acknowledge all authors and contributors in line with the University's guidance on fair attribution. The University of York, and any research funding, should also be acknowledged following best practice and using standard persistent identifiers wherever possible.

- g. A REF Manager had been recruited and the University had been selected to take part in the REF People, Culture and Environment Pilot Exercise.
- h. The PVC-International would work with YGRS to respond to changes in the UK Graduate Visa Route.

PROFESSOR MATTHIAS RUTH
27/06/24

MS ZOE DEACY-CLARKE

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE (URC)

1) COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

University Research Committee (URC) oversees research activity at the University, reporting to the University Senate which oversees all academic matters. URC advises Senate and the University Executive Board on strategy, approves internal policy and monitors the research performance of the institution.

URC is responsible for:

1. Considering and approving proposed University policy with relation to research;
2. Advising upon the University Strategy and, as appropriate, approving strategies with relation to research;
3. Assessing research performance and monitoring progress against key internal and external indicators;
4. Identifying priority areas for research support and advising on a framework in which to support the effective provision of this; *and*
5. Supporting engagement with key internal and external stakeholders.

2) COMMITTEE REMIT

The remit of the Committee under the following core, agenda-aligned headings, is:

2 a) Strategic Development, Planning, Performance Monitoring and Resourcing

Items for consideration and/or decision:

1. To advise Senate and the University Executive Board on all matters relating to the research strategy of the University; to support the development of the University's Research Strategy and to support the Vice-Chancellor, the University Executive Board and Pro-Vice-Chancellor(s) in driving the strategy forward.
2. To identify priority areas for research support and to advise the University Executive Board on organisational structures for research, on the selective distribution of resources within the University in order to ensure appropriate alignment of resource allocation with research strategy, and where other initiatives within the University have implications for research activity.
3. To monitor the research performance of the institution and its academic departments, entities and faculties in terms of research quality, sustainability of research income, and impact, drawing on national and international benchmarking data.
4. To advise the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research on areas where improvements could be made, where there are significant risks and/or where new opportunities may be pursued.
5. To support the University in its engagement with key external stakeholders relating to research, including business, industry, the government, cultural institutions and funding agencies.
6. To influence the development of research policy and strategy of key national and international agencies in the interests of the University (eg UKRI, Research Councils, Research England, European Union).

2 b) Policy and Regulatory Matters

1. To set internal policy in response to external requirements (eg peer review processes, external research assessment), and to make recommendations and report in these areas to the University Senate and University Executive Board.
2. To monitor policy concerning research in relation to external requirements, ensuring that regulatory needs are met.
3. To champion and promote research excellence and integrity, and to oversee the development and maintenance of the supporting policy framework, reporting annually to Senate and Council.
4. To receive annual updates from departments on research activities and performance including research impact, in order to advise the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research on areas where improvements could be made, where there are significant risks and/or where new opportunities may be pursued.

3) COMMITTEE AUTHORITY

On behalf of Senate, URC is empowered to make decisions relating to research and to seek assurance relating to the quality of these activities as set out above. It can also make recommendations and/or refer items to Senate, UEB, UTC, UPEC and other University committees as appropriate.

URC is also empowered to authorise amendments to its own Terms of Reference and membership.

URC has no direct budgetary control but is able to endorse and support proposed activities in relation to research support. URC is able to review and/or set strategic priorities for research funding.

4) REPORTING AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The following groups report to University Research Committee:

- Faculty Research Groups
- University Research Priming Committee
- Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee
- York Graduate Research School Board
- Research Reputation Strategy Group
- Open Research Strategy Group
- Mental Health Research Strategy Group
- Centre for Future Health Steering Group
- Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee
- Research Systems Steering Group

Meeting frequency: a minimum of six times per year, with the facility to transact and record decisions by written resolution or, where necessary, Chair's Action.

Meeting modes: Meetings in 2023/24 to be held primarily in person, with the option of joining via Zoom where necessary.

5) CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP

The membership of URC is a combination of ex officio appointments, including academic leaders, representatives of professional services, and representatives of academic staff appointed by Senate.

In contributing to the business of URC, members represent the offices against which they are listed in the Committee's constituency. In the case of elected academic members, these members represent the broad academic community at the University of York, rather than the interests of their individual departments. The Faculty Deans and Associate Deans (Research) provide the link between the Faculties and the Committee.

Academic staff representatives should be drawn from each of the three Faculties, with no two members from the same department, and should between them have sufficient experience to be able to speak to Committee activities.

Proxy or alternate members are not permitted. Individual colleagues may be invited to attend for select items as and when the need arises.

In order to ensure that the Committee's business is conducted robustly and transparently, members are required to identify and report any pertinent potential or actual conflicts of interest, both via an annual exercise, and on an ongoing ad hoc basis should such conflicts become apparent in the interim.

This enables the conduct of the Committee's work to be adapted accordingly and the conflicts mitigated. Details of procedures for handling conflicts of interest are set out in a separate document, available from the Policy, Integrity and Performance Office.

Members may be required from time to time to undertake additional activities, for example membership of review panels or working groups.

Quorum: 50% of members, or 50%+ one member where the number of members is not even.

Membership review: membership will be periodically reviewed by the Committee itself for Senate approval. Membership is otherwise co-terminous with the individual's appointment term. Gender balance and wider EDI considerations should be factored into the Committee's reflection on its own size and composition.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Chair)

- Professor Matthias Ruth

The Dean of the York Graduate Research School (*ex officio*)

- Professor Kathryn Arnold

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (*ex officio*)

- Professor Sarah Thompson

The Faculty Associate Deans (Research) (*ex officio*)

- Professor Jane Hill (Sciences)
- Professor Richard Ogden (Arts and Humanities)

